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ABSTRACT

A new body of educational research is now showing that there are many things teachers, principals, and schools can do to improve student performance. Effective teachers do five things: (1) focus teaching and curriculum selection on the basic skills; (2) provide most instruction to the class as a whole; (3) maintain a high student success rate; (4) monitor individual performance; and (5) have a well-organized classroom. Effective principals: (1) use the status and power of their position to set strategic goals for the school; (2) function as the instruction leader of the school by using instruction management strategies; (3) have and use knowledge and skills needed for effective instruction; (4) develop a school climate characterized by specific conditions; and (5) exhibit an open, professional and collegial style. Six important elements of effective schools are in the areas of management, academic focus, evaluation, attitudes, climate, and organization. These findings can provide a policy base for developing education policies in state education improvement programs. (JMK)

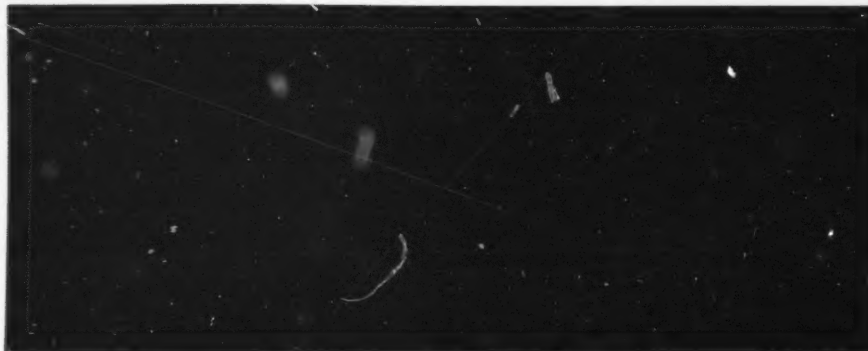
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1. Research Findings On Effective Teaching and Schools

The Issue

A new body of research is now showing that there are many things teachers, principals and schools can do to improve student performance. This Issuegram summarizes that research and suggests how the results can be used in state policies to improve the quality of public education.

New Research Improves on Old

The new research emerged from the negativism that surrounded schools as a result the Coleman and Jencks' reports of the sixties. The lay public interpreted these reports as meaning "schools don't make a difference." The effective teaching and effective schools research network responded by trying to determine what, in teaching and in schools, did make a difference. A major purpose was to identify whether things that were under the control of schools could make a difference in student learning or achievement, especially for poor and minority students in urban areas. The new research results are especially useful because they come from hours of observing school processes and teacher behavior, as compared to the old research which simply conducted complicated

statistical analyses of inputs and outputs, ignoring the process of teaching and learning.

Research Identifies Successful Practices

1. Teachers. There is a fairly wide agreement on a set of both teaching and classroom management practices that are effective in increasing student performance in a wide variety of settings, at all levels, and in many subject areas, but especially reading and math. Effective teachers:

- Focus teaching and curriculum selection on the basic skills or agreed-upon academic focus of the school, maintain a fast pace, and cover content extensively.
- Provide most instruction to the class as a whole or to large groups, using the direct instruction model.
- Maintain a high student success rate especially for the introduction of new content, seatwork and homework. They recognize that "challenging" students with difficult work for which the success rate is low generally is not effective.
- Monitor individual student performance, praise correct answers, and provide individual, specific, academically oriented corrective feedback on incorrect answers.
- Have a well-organized classroom that includes training students in classroom procedures and transition processes (especially at the beginning of the school year), and a clear, fair and uniform disciplinary system.

These teaching and management strategies, combined, make more academic learning time (ALT) available for instruction and help to keep the student success rate high. Studies show that the more ALT, the greater the learning.

High quality and detailed training manuals using these results have been developed and used successfully in staff training programs in many school districts across the country. Teachers trained in the techniques listed above use them in classrooms, and student performance improves.

In short, there is a research-based technology of teaching that improves student performance in reading and math in the most complex education settings -- schools with concentrations of poor and minority students.

2. Principals. The effective-principal research is just beginning to amass results. These studies go beyond the generalities usually associated with "leadership" and identify the specific behaviors of principals that are linked to school and teacher effectiveness. Effective principals:

- Use the status and power of their position to set strategic goals and vision for the school, visibly support the school's improvement program, and direct the entire program of the school toward those goals.
- Function as the instruction leader of the school by using instruction management strategies that promote and enhance effective teaching practices, including working on such alterable variables as
 - time: fostering more for instruction, less for "intrusions."
 - class size and composition: assigning students to classrooms on the basis of what research indicates is the desired pupil composition for maximum learning.
 - organization: grouping teachers, programs and students in ways to shape positively the learning experience.
 - curriculum: developing an articulated schoolwide curriculum that is coordinated across both grade levels and programs.
- Have and use knowledge and skills needed for effective instruction. Effective principals know thoroughly the effective teaching research and are involved with teachers in infusing practices into the classroom.
- Develop a school climate characterized by
 - high teacher expectations for student learning.
 - collegial, interactive relationships among the teaching staff and between the teachers and the principal (teacher lounge talk is characterized by

talk about the business of instruction, not pupil war stories).

- commitment to continuous improvement.
- public recognition of effective teachers.
- a tightly (though not hierarchically) coupled organization.
- Exhibit an open, professional and collegial style that fosters joint discussion, evaluation and improvement, including:
 - an expectation that staff know the effective teaching research.
 - direct participation in staff development sessions, including making presentations.
 - development of sanctions, supports and rewards for teacher improvement efforts.
 - buffeting of teachers from internal and external pressures.

In short, this promising research is unearthing specific aspects of principal behavior that can be linked to improved student performance.

3. Schools. The effective schools research is more varied, since there are many definitions of effectiveness. Nevertheless, consistent portraits of effective schools are beginning to emerge. Six major elements of effective schools have been identified:

- Management: strong instructional leadership by the principal.
- Academic focus: schoolwide academic focus; agreement that instruction in those academic areas is the main goal; an organized and articulated curriculum focused on the academic goals.
- Evaluation: a system for monitoring and assessing student performance that is tied to the instructional program.
- Attitudes: teacher expectations that all students can achieve at high levels.

- Climate: an environment conducive to learning -- safe, orderly, and with a consistent and fair discipline program.
- Organization: collegial, not hierarchical; tightly coupled; an ongoing staff development program.

Other Research Supports School Improvement

Emerging and complementary results of research on the school improvement process, dissemination and utilization, evaluation, and local capacity building are beginning to identify other critical elements for improving the quality of public education. These results provide specific information on the varying roles teachers, principals, LEA central office staff, superintendents, SEA staff and other outside consultants play in the school improvement process.

Findings Provide Policy Base

All of the above research results can be used to start the backward-mapping process for developing state education policies. Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania and West Virginia are some of the leading states using this knowledge in newly developed education improvement programs.

- Education Improvement Policies
 - Require schools of education to teach these effective techniques in methods courses.
 - Create new staff development programs for teachers on effective teaching and classroom management strategies.
 - Develop academies to train principals in general skills to be instructional leaders, in management skills to structure the school to increase time on task, and in interpersonal skills to implement changes for school improvement.
 - Develop, for superintendents, staff recruitment and selection techniques for effective teachers and principals.
 - Organize an effective schools program to create the characteristics of effective schools in all schools.

- Extend the school year and the school day to increase time on task.
- Require more homework to increase time on task.
- Education Finance Policies
 - Recognize the school as the most effective unit for education improvement, and pay more attention to school site budgeting and resource allocation to the school, not the district level.
 - Support/fund teacher development programs and principal academies.
 - Develop mini-grant programs for schools and teachers to encourage bottom-up initiatives for school improvement.
 - Foster national, state, regional and district networks spreading news about effective practices and providing help in local implementation.
 - Fund continuing research to expand the effective principal, effective school and school improvement process research results, and specifically to document the differential impact of school improvement strategies in low, medium and high spending districts.

What To Read

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Edmonds, Ronald, "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Educational Leadership, October 1979.

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Odden, Allan and Van Dougherty, State Programs of School Improvement: A 50-State Survey. Denver, Colo.: Education Commission of the States, August 1982. \$3.

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